

## **DIFI CONCLUDES ‘PARENTING, CHILD WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT’ INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

*QF member’s event highlights importance of investing in parenting strategies*

**Doha, Qatar, October 24, 2018:** The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), has concluded its two-day international conference titled ‘Parenting, Child Wellbeing and Development.’

Held under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, the event took place at the St. Regis Doha. Sessions focused on the importance of investing in parents and parenting strategies – in the form of programs, laws, and policies at all levels – while promoting policies and programs to support parents and caregivers, as the family contributes to both national and international developments.

The second day began with a high-level panel discussion on ‘Investing in Parenting Education Programs.’ Participants discussed the need to monitor the performance and development of these programs around the world, as well as the key challenges of scaling such initiatives and the need for expanding them.

The session was chaired by Mr. Wadih Maalouf, Programme Manager, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Panelists included Frances Gardner, Professor of Child and Family Psychology, University of Oxford; Ignacio Socias, Director of Communication, International Federation for Family Development; Jamie Lachman, Co-founder, Parenting for Lifelong Health; and Dr. Zulkifli Ismail, Consultant Pediatrician, Chairman, Positive Parenting Program.

Mr. Maalouf said: “A child’s growth and development is affected by family, school, and society, but family remains the most important factor in their development – hence the importance of programs that invest in parenting.”

Professor Gardner said: “Evidence suggests that severe parenting can cause deviation, poor school performance, and crime and drug addiction, emphasizing the importance of intervening and providing parental assistance. This will enable parents to learn positive parenting skills and a non-violent disciplinary system, while relieving them of stress.”

She stressed the importance of these programs, and that their cost remains less than the negative effects resulting from poor parenting, while also providing compelling accounts of different parenting programs’ validity and applicability in different countries.

Mr. Ignacio Socias explained that the way to achieve a work-family balance is through flexibility and parental cooperation in raising children, saying: “Flexibility is the key to balancing work and family. We must shift from a market aimed at single breadwinner families towards a more flexible one, in which the responsibilities of parenting and maintaining families do not fall mainly on women.”

The panel discussion was followed by two parallel sessions, with the first taking the theme of ‘Parenting Children Living with Disabilities.’ It discussed the challenges faced by parents who support children with special-needs, and the urgent requirement for targeted training to enhance parenting skills so that parents can provide better care for their children.

The session was chaired by Dr. Jumana Odeh, Founder and Director General, Palestinian Happy Child Center. Panelists included Dr. Wafaa Yazeedi, Assistant Professor of Clinical Rehabilitation Medicine, Hamad Medical Corporation and Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar, a QF partner university; Nora Wells, Executive Director, Family Voices, USA; Ignacio Campoy Cervera, Senior Lecturer, University Carlos III of Madrid; and Dolorence Were, Executive Director, Uganda Society for Disabled Children.

The second parallel session, titled ‘Parenting Children with Behavioral Problems’, dissected matters such as adolescent defiance; behaviors that display anger and frustration in children; delays in children’s self-regulation abilities; and parenting methods that should be followed to support, monitor, and supervise children. It was chaired by David Finkelhor, Professor of Sociology, University of New Hampshire, with panelists including Alina Morawska, Deputy Director (Research), Parenting and Family Support Center, University of Queensland; Cynthia Leung Man, Professor, Family, Child, Youth and Ageing Studies, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Erin Valentine, Clinical Psychologist, Sidra Medicine, a member of QF; and Sadiyya Haffejee, PhD Psychology, Kids Haven.

Additionally, the ‘Parenting Across the Arab Region’ session highlighted the key challenges facing parents across the region, while identifying and showcasing examples of evidence-based, innovative parenting programs from around the world. The session was chaired by Suha Al-Hassan, Professor of Early Childhood and Special Education, The Hashemite University, Jordan. Panelists included Batoul Khalifa, Associate Professor of Mental Health, Qatar University; Anis Ben Brik, Director, Family Policy Department, DIFI; Mustapha Achoui, Vice Rector for Planning, Research and Development, Arab Open University – Kuwait; and Khadija Moufid, Head of Center for Family Studies and Research in Values and Law. A parallel session – ‘Best Practices – East Asia and Pacific’ – was also held.

The conference concluded with an interactive discussion session, which allowed researchers and academics to exchange experiences and review obstacles to research, and debate their studies on parenting issues while proposing best practices to enable them to conduct and complete their research. In addition, DIFI shared the “Civil Society Statement on Parenting” with the attendees, which was launched prior to the kick off of its international conference.

For more information regarding the DIFI international conference, please visit [www.difi.org.qa](http://www.difi.org.qa)

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## **About Doha International Family Institute (DIFI):**

DIFI is a pioneer international organization in the State of Qatar that supports research programs, policies and social outreach to promote the development of Arab families. Focusing primarily on research, DIFI supports a wide range of national, regional and international evidence based studies pertaining to marriage, family building, women, fertility, demographics, children, family safety, child safety, fatherhood and motherhood. DIFI comprises three divisions: family research division, family policy division and social outreach division. DIFI is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and has a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC).

## **Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential**

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit [www.qf.org.qa](http://www.qf.org.qa)